

What is claimed:

1. A mobile instant messaging device for communicating instant messages with a plurality of instant  
5 message communities, comprising:

a user interface for displaying a plurality community-specific icons, each community-specific icon providing an identification of one of the instant message communities;

a plurality of configuration data files, each configuration data file being associated with one of the community-specific icons; and

10 a common instant messaging application;

wherein upon selecting one of the community-specific icons, the common instant messaging application is configured for use as a community-specific instant messaging application using the associated configuration data file.

15 2. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, further comprising:

a database coupled to the common instant messaging application for storing instant messaging data for each of the plurality of instant messaging communities.

3. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, further comprising:

20 a wireless interface for communicating instant messages to a wireless data network.

4. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, further comprising:

a display for displaying the user interface.

5. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, further comprising:

a keyboard for entering instant messaging text into the mobile instant messaging device.

6. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the user interface is a user interface

5 ribbon.

7. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 6, wherein the user interface ribbon is a one or two dimensional graphical set of icons, including the plurality of community-specific icons.

10 8. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the identification of one of the instant messaging communities is a textual identification.

9. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the identification of one of the instant messaging communities is a graphical identification.

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10. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of community-specific icons is configured to display instant messaging information to a user of the mobile instant messaging device.

20 11. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 10, wherein the instant messaging information includes current presence information for the user with respect to the instant messaging community identified by the community specific icon.

12. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 10, wherein the instant messaging information  
25 includes a value indicating a number of received messages.

13. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, further comprising:

a processor for configuring and executing the common instant messaging application.

5 14. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the configuration data file includes information which configures the functionality and appearance of the common instant messaging application so that it functions and appears like a community-specific instant messaging application.

15. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the common instant messaging  
10 application monitors a trigger event for at least one of the instant messaging communities and upon detecting the trigger event, causes the user interface to display the community-specific icon for that instant messaging community.

16. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 15, wherein the trigger event is at least one of: (1)  
15 receiving an invitation to chat; (2) receiving a service book record that identifies a particular service accessible through one of the instant messaging communities; (3) entering of a secret code into the device; (4) activation of a download file; (5) clicking on a link in a browser; or (6) receiving an email with a control code for activating a particular service.

20 17. The mobile instant messaging device of claim 1, wherein the community-specific icons, the configuration data files, and the common instant messaging application are stored in a Flash memory device within the mobile instant messaging device.

18. A multi-community instant messaging system, comprising:

a plurality of instant messaging communities;

a network; and

at least one mobile instant messaging device, the mobile instant messaging device

5 comprising: a user interface for displaying a plurality community-specific icons, each community-specific icon providing an identification of one of the instant message communities; a plurality of configuration data files, each configuration data file being associated with one of the community-specific icons; and a common instant messaging application;

wherein upon selecting one of the community-specific icons, the common instant  
10 messaging application is configured for use as a community-specific instant messaging application using the associated configuration data file, and may communicate instant messages over the network to the selected instant messaging community.

19. A method of instant messaging in a mobile communication device, comprising the steps of:

15 displaying a plurality community-specific icons on a user interface of the device, each community-specific icon providing an identification of one of a plurality of instant message communities;

storing a plurality of configuration data files, each configuration data file being associated with one of the community-specific icons;

20 selecting one of the community-specific icons; and

in response to the selecting step, configuring a common instant messaging application for use as a community-specific instant messaging application using the associated configuration data file.

20. A computer readable medium encoded with software instructions for performing the method of claim 19 on the mobile communication device.